

You're Safe Now by IWriteWorksNotTragedies, richiegayzier

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: AU Fic, Angst, Collab, F/M, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Martin Brenner, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven/Mike Wheeler

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-11-12

Updated: 2018-03-07

Packaged: 2022-04-21 15:20:07

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 10

Words: 11,070

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

It's ok, you're safe now, they can't reach you here.

(This work was originally written between early winter 2016 and early spring 2017, before season 2, everything before chapter 10 was written in that timeframe as well, I think it's finally time to finish this work -IWriteWorksNotTragedies)

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

A/N WAIT! THIS WAS A COLLAB! So, this was brought to you by yours truly and StrangerThingsMileven on FanFiction.net

They wrote most of the dialogue, and you can expect LOTS of that in future chapters. Anyways, we hope you like this!

I sat against the science cupboards, my body feeling completely numb as I watched her turn away from me towards the Demogorgon, towards her fate. Not if I had a say in it. Suddenly, power surged through my bones as I shot up and raced towards El, grabbing ahold of her arm. "No El!" I shouted, my voice lost beneath her screams. "I'm not letting you leave me! You can't leave me! I'm not gonna lose you again!" The black dust surrounded us, and I felt it trying to pull her apart. But I wouldn't let go. I wouldn't let it take her away from me. Finally, the ash settled and the noise stopped. I felt sure I was dead. But then I saw Dustin and Lucas staring at me in disbelief, and I saw the broken door, and I saw the familiar classroom. And... El. Lying on the floor. Collapsed.

"El? El!?"

She wasn't waking up. I felt for a pulse, but couldn't find one. She wasn't breathing.

"EL!?"

"Mike? Mike what's wrong?" Asked Dustin

"She won't wake up! EL?"

"Mike, calm down! Move over, I know CPR. I learned how in health class last year!" Said Lucas

He performed basic CPR, desperately trying to get her to wake up, he had only been her friend for hours, he felt bad for how he had treated her.

"Ok, Mike, when I tell you, exhale into her mouth, twice, for one second, got it?" Said Lucas

"Yes."

"Ok, now!"

I breathed into her mouth once, desperately trying to hold it

together.

“And now!”

I breathed one more time, silently pleading for her to wake up. She woke up on the second try, and looked panicked on why I was breathing into her mouth.

“Oh my God, El!” I cried, tears dripping down my face.

“M-Mike?”

“I’m here, I’m here. Don’t worry. You’re okay now. You’re okay.”

“Someone call the chief!” Said Lucas

Suddenly, I heard sirens coming towards the school.

“Guys! What are we going to do about El? They’ll take her to a hospital!”

“So?” Said Lucas

“So! What if more agents take her!”

“We’ll just make sure she doesn’t go!”

I was weighing in my options. I knew that agents would likely be there to try and take her, but she wouldn’t let them. I wouldn’t let them. I wasn’t going to lose her again.

“Fine, now let’s go!”

As Ted pulled into the middle school, we got out of the car, not bothering to park in a space.

“Michael! Michael!?”

I found him, hugging someone I didn’t know.

“Michael? Oh my God. What happened?”

“We... were getting our books!”

“When some guys with suits came in and opened fire!” Said Dustin

“And we ran outside!” Chimed in Lucas

“Who, is, this, and why is their face bloody?” I said, gesturing to the... person next to Mike. They had the features of a girl (though barely, their body was so thin) and were wearing a familiar looking pink dress, but their hair was buzzed almost to the scalp.

“This is our friend. She hasn’t enrolled in school yet. We were showing her round while we got our books.”

So, they were a she, then. I was confused as to why her hair was so short, but I didn’t want to sound rude.

“The gunshots made her ears bleed.” Added Dustin

“Hey mom, can she stay at our house?” Asked Mike

“What! Why? And how? I already have enough children!”

“Her parents died, and she doesn’t have a place to stay. And don’t

worry, I'll take care of her!"

Mike made it sound like he wanted to adopt a puppy, not a person. Taking care of three children was already a lot of work, but it would be nice to have another daughter, even if she did start at around Mike's age. Besides, the poor girl had no family to go to.

"For now. But, you must sleep in the basement, she'll sleep in your room."

"Ok!"

He sounded excited, a little too excited for my liking. Maybe she was more than a friend to him? For now, I couldn't worry about that. There were four children in front of me who needed to be taken care of.

"Now, come on, it's cold out here. You two, stay here, your mothers will be here soon." I said to Lucas and Dustin.

We got in the car, and headed home.

"Ok, once you guys get in, go and shower. Ok?" Said Mike's mom

"Yes mom." Said Mike

"Yes." I said

Mike went down to the basement to get me some clothes.

"Hey, what's your name." Asked Mike's mom

I didn't know to tell her 'Eleven' or 'El'.

"El"

"Well, hi El, I'm Karen, you're going to sleep in Mike's room, ok?"

"Yes."

"Hey honey, are we having chicken for dinner?" Asked Mike's father

"Not the time Ted!"

Mike came back upstairs

"Here you go El, I show you where the bathroom is."

He gave me black 'sweatpants' is what they called it and a red shirt, and led me upstairs and into his bathroom.

"Here."

I didn't know what the knobs in the shower were for.

"Oh, I'll turn it on, don't worry."

He turned them on, the water was warm, it felt nice compared to the chill outside.

"I'll just leave the door cracked, ok?"

"Ok." I said

He left, leaving me alone to a mirror, there was a cut on my cheek, but other than that I looked ok.

I took my clothes off and got in the shower.

I scrubbed all the dirt and blood off, and washed my hair with soap. I didn't get to shower much at the lab, but when they let me, it was nice, but the water was cold there. I got out of the shower, but I slipped, and hit the floor. I could hear someone running to the door.

"El? Are you ok?"

I didn't feel ok, my head hurt, and all the air escaped me.

"El?"

"Yes."

"Ok, are you hurt? Do I need to get my mom?"

"No."

"Ok, just, be careful. The ground gets slippery when the floor is wet."

"Ok."

I got dressed, and went to Mike's room.

"Oh, hey El, I replaced the sheets, and added some more blankets in case you get cold."

"Thanks."

"Ok, well, I have to go make my bed downstairs now, goodnight El."

I caught his hand as he was leaving

"Stay?"

"But El, my mom said I had to sleep downstairs, and she would probably kill me if she knew I stayed up here."

I was worried, she would kill him?

"No, it's just an expression. She wouldn't actually kill me."

"Stay?"

"Well, fine. I'll go get some more blankets."

As Mike went out the room to get the blankets I looked around his room. My room now. I'd never had a real room. Sure, I had a room at the lab, but it was more like a prison. The walls were stark white, the tile floor was cold, the bed was hard and stiff. The only bits that made it seem like a room was my lion and the picture on the wall of me and Papa. It was a complete contrast to this room. The walls were painted a deep blue, though I could barely tell from all the posters that crowded them, and the floor was a soft beige carpet, warm on my toes. His bed was soft too, and I was compelled to lie down, snuggling myself deep under the duvet, feeling safe and happy. A few minutes later, he was back. He lay down awkwardly on top of the duvet and covered himself with one of the extra blankets, facing me. We stayed like that for a while, looking into the others face. It was Mike who broke the silence.

“I’m really happy your home El.”

“Thank you.”

And then I was crying. A panicked expression crossed his face as he hugged me close, hushing me.

“What’s wrong?”

“Y-Y-You’re nice. You’re good. I’m not. I’m bad. I’m a monster. I’m sorry.”

By now, Mike had tears in his eyes too.

“No El, you’re not a monster, you don’t deserve all the pain and suffering that you’ve gone through for years. It’s not your fault.”

How, how could he do that, he could make me turn into a wreck with one sentence.

“Mike- “

“It’s ok, you’re safe now, they can’t reach you here.”

“Do you have eyes on them, Shepard two?” I said.

“Yes, Dr Brenner, I have eyes on them.”

“Okay, tell your team to refrain from contact. The boy doesn’t know what’s happening yet, and we need to find their weaknesses. Do you copy?”

“Yes sir.”

“Good. Now, take every precaution possible, and stay out of sight. We need to bring 011 home. And get subject 012 too.”

Notes for the Chapter:

Hope you like this cliffhanger... ;)

2. Chapter 2

It was 2am when they got the call. Usually, everyone would've been asleep at this time, but I (and El, who I wouldn't leave alone and therefore was attached to my hip) had been waiting for it since I got home. "Hello?"

"Mike?" It was Jonathan. "Will's back home. He should be awake in the next hour or- "

"We'll be right there Jonathan!" I shouted, cutting him off and slamming the receiver down before speeding up the stairs to my parents' room. "Mom! Come on! Let's go! Why isn't anyone moving! Will's awake! We need to go!"

"Michael!" My mom cried, switching on her lamp. "It's 2am! I am not driving to hospital right now!"

I sighed frustrated, tapping my foot on the carpet, before an idea popped into my head.

"Fine!" I shouted, rushing out of the bedroom and dragging El back down the stairs. My mom was confused. "Where are you going?"

"To see Will!"

Suddenly, she was fully awake.

"What? Mike! Michael!" But by the time she got down to the front door, I had already pedalled away, El seated behind me.

Pedalling through the dead of night, I felt more alive than I had all week. If not for the cold wind whipping against my face, or the feeling of El digging her knees into my side, I'd have thought it was all a dream. For the most part, I was glad it wasn't. Sure, Will had been kidnapped by an inter-dimensional monster, but he was back now, he was safe. The monster was dead. And El was still here. I kept reminding myself of that as I biked down street after street, occasionally pointing out buildings to her. I couldn't see her face, but I knew she was smiling. Something about that filled my chest with warmth. Making her happy, I thought, was possibly the nicest feeling in the world.

As soon as we reached the hospital, we ran through the entrance up to the reception, where Jonathan was standing, waiting for us. "Where's your parents?" He asked. I just shrugged my shoulders. "Still in bed, I think. Can we see Will?" The older boy chuckled.

“Sure. Lucas and Dustin are already in there.”

As I walked into the room, El’s hand in mine, Dustin cheered and ran up to us, dragging us over to Will. “What took you so long Wheeler?” I grinned.

“We had to bike here. Cut us some slack. Hey Will!” I said, hugging my friend.

“Hi.” Will whispered back. He looked over to the girl standing back awkwardly. “Hi El.”

“Hello.” Her voice was timid, but she stepped closer, as Dustin put an arm around her.

“We’ve been telling Will all about you.” He said, giving his signature toothy smile. I shook my head and rolled my eyes. “I’m sure you guys have.” And then we were all engrossed in conversation, re telling the events of the week (“Troy peed himself!”) “Yeah, El squeezed his bladder with her mind!”) and talking about things that’d happened before that, which intrigued El greatly. It was as if we hadn’t just dealt with the supernatural. It was as if we were just 5 friends, talking with each other.

For a while, my life felt... normal. Whole. The guys and I didn’t have to fight any monsters, run away from a government agency, or make a sensory deprivation tank in the gym. One thing didn’t feel normal, I made a new friend, someone that I couldn’t feel better around, someone that I liked, more than a friend.

I didn’t know what to call it.

I thought it might be love. I knew kids my age weren’t supposed to know what that felt like, but I thought I did. It was the butterflies I got in my stomach when she was around, the way my heart beat outside of my chest when she entwined her fingers into mine. The urge that I felt to protect her from what I thought I couldn’t, and at the same time let her be free to explore the world she’d never knew. I thought that was what love felt like.

I didn’t want to rush her into a ‘relationship’, she barely knew what love was. She needed time to be free, to explore the world. But I really, really wanted to hold her hand. To wrap her in warm hugs. To kiss her. The truth was, I wouldn’t ever dare kiss her again. She didn’t know what a kiss was exactly. Sure, she seemed to like holding hands, and I was the one who received her small smile most frequently, but she didn’t know what she was feeling. I knew that. So,

I didn't rush her, and instead let her have her space.

It took two weeks before my mom asked about the events of that week, which both Nancy and I thought must be a miracle. Still, we weren't quite prepared for her to just walk in and blatantly demand answers. "Okay." She said, coming into the kitchen and startling us both. "I've given you two weeks. Two weeks to have your space. But there's a little girl living in my house who just appeared out of nowhere, and no one has told me anything. About her, or why the hell the government were looking for my son. Or what happened in the middle school that night. So, someone start talking. Now." For a minute, we just looked at each other, having a silent conversation. Then, I nodded and looked back to my mom. "Let me make a few calls."

10 minutes later, my mom was sat in her living room, accompanied by us, the little girl she'd taken into her home, my friends, one of their moms, her eldest son, and the chief of police. "So," Hopper said, smirking a little "heard you wanted some answers?"

"That week Will went missing..." Joyce began "He was taken. But not by a man. By a... beast. A monster."

"Demogorgon." El mumbled. The older woman nodded her head.

"Yeah. A Demogorgon. He was taken to a different dimension that the kids called- "

"The upside down" Dustin said, cutting her off

"And we went to find him in the woods." I said

"But found someone else." Said Lucas, gesturing at El

"And took her home." I said

"And gave her clothes." Said Dustin, trying to hold it together, remembering the memory

"She slept in the basement." Said Lucas

"In the fort?" Asked My mom

"Yes." Said El

"And we figured out she had powers." I said

"Powers!? What powers?" Asked My mom, a little flustered

"Telepathy, Telekinesis, Et cetera." Said Hopper

"Show her El." Suggested Dustin

"No! She'll get drained" I said, ever the protective one. Dustin rolled his eyes, earning himself an elbow in the ribs.

“Anyways, Barb and I went to a party at Steve’s. And she cut herself, attracting the monster, it took her, and- “ She cut her self-off, the thought of Barb’s death was still a little too much.

“I found them, and took a picture of Barb, which had the monster in the background.” Finished Jonathan

“I went back looking for Barb, and saw the monster, but I didn’t know what it was.” Said Nancy, pulling herself together

“I figured out that the body they found at the quarry was a fake.” Said Hopper, leaving out the impromptu interrogation

“And I went to Jonathan, asking about the picture.”

“My mom described what was in it, a faceless person basically.” Said Jonathan

“And we went to look for El.” Said Dustin

“Where did El go?” My mom asked

“El got lost. They couldn’t find her after the fact, they had gone too far.” Said Lucas, deciding not to bring up El attacking him

“Where were you?”

“I had to stay home, watch my cat.”

“Anyways- “ I cut in, trying to spare Lucas making even more excuses

“Looking for El, we ran into Troy and his sidekick.” Said Dustin

“And El fought them off.” I said

“By breaking his arm. That’s when we realised that we were looking for her, not Will.” Said Hopper

“And looked for information on her, not knowing that she was living in your basement.” Said Joyce

“So the government agency figured out that we had her.” Said Lucas

“What agency?”

“The CIA? We never really figured that out.” Said Dustin

“So we ran.” I said

“And that’s why they questioned us?”

“Yes.” Said El

“You don’t talk much, do you sweetie?” Asked My mom

She shook her head

“Anyways, we told the chief where we were.” Said Dustin

“And we went back to Joyce’s house, then we went to the school and-”

“We made a sensory deprivation tank.” Said Dustin, cutting someone off yet again

“A what?”

“Basically a pool, where you seem weightless, see nothing, hear

nothing, feel nothing.” Said Joyce, quoting Terry Ives’ sister
“And El found Will, and Barb.” Said Dustin.

El and Nancy seemed to tense at that, Nancy grieving her lost friend and El grimacing at the memory.

But I knew how to comfort El, so I held her hand, squeezing it gently. And Jonathan did the same to Nancy.

“Anyway, after that Mrs Byers and the Chief went to get Will.” Said Lucas.

“And Nancy and Jonathan went to kill the monster.” Chimed in Dustin.

“At the Byers’ house.”

“So we were at the school.”

“But then the bad men came.”

“Bad men?” My mom asked.

“Papa.” Whispered El, nuzzling her head into my shoulder. I wrapped an arm around her protectively, dreading the next things they would talk about.

“Wh-Who is papa?” My mom asked, immediately regretting the question once she saw Eleven’s slight twitch at the sound of his name
“Dr. Martin Brenner, head of the lab where she was kept.” Said Hopper

I looked over to El, she looked discomforted at the mere mention of his name. It made my blood boil, that she’s scared of the man who ‘raised’ her for twelve years. Years of abuse, pain, suffering, loneliness.

“Anyways, they found us, and El killed a lot of them. Had to have been at least ten.” Said Dustin

“How about you stop bragging at the death toll, and get back to telling the story.” I said, clearly annoyed by the fact that he was making El uncomfortable

“Ok, I’ll tell the story. Brenner caught us, and the Demogorgon found us from the blood of the dead agents, and we escaped. And we were cornered into a science classroom, the Demogorgon found us and El killed it, but Mike ‘anchored’ her to this world, instead of her going who knows where.” Said Lucas

“We found Will and brought him home.” Said Hopper

“And that’s it.” Said Nancy

They all knew that they all left out some stuff, each for their own reasons

“Wow, ok.” Said My mom

“Just let it sink in.” I said

It took her a few minutes, but she caught her bearings

“Ok, well, it's getting late, how about you all go home.”

“Oh yeah, well, see you next weekend Karen.” Said Joyce

“Bye” I told Joyce

“Bye you guys” Said Dustin, Lucas, and Will

“See you tomorrow.” I said, waving to them.

“Hey sweetie, what would you like for dinner?” Mike’s mom asked me.

“Eggos.” I said

“Umm, ok.”

“Here El, why don’t we go clean up the living room?” Mike asked

“Ok.”

They went into the living room

“I’m sorry.” Said Mike

“What?” I asked

“For making you go through that, I should’ve just left you out of it.”

“No, Mike.”

I couldn’t think of a word to make him sure that I was good.

“Dinner is ready!” Called Mike’s mom

I had noticed that we hadn’t stopped holding hands, I never wanted to let go, but of course, warm Eggos were at stake, so I did.

We ate dinner, and went upstairs to wash up.

“Hey El?” Said Mike

“Yes?”

“I’m glad your home.”

“Me too.”

3. Chapter 3

“Ready for your first day of school?” Asked my dad

It wasn’t *really* the first day of school, it was actually the last week of November, which I was perfectly ok with, winter break was only a week away.

“Yeah.”

I walked into school and into the principal’s office.

“Hello Maxine, I’m Principal Coleman.”

“It’s Max. My name, it’s Max.” I said

I hated the name Maxine, it reminded me of my mother, who passed away last year.

“Ok, *Max*. Welcome to Hawkins Middle. Here is your school schedule.”

He passed me a piece of paper

Damn it. Math first period, and Science last period. My two least favorite subjects.

“Your first class should start in five minutes. Your locker is down the hall, number twenty-eight. The code is Fifteen, Six, Sixty-seven, forty-eight. You can leave while your father signs some paperwork.” Said the principal

“Ok.” I said

I left the room in search of locker twenty-eight

There it is.

I put my things in it and headed towards my classes.

The day was normal, school was pretty boring, I was glad that science was last period.

“Lucas, ready to go to class?” Asked Will

“Oh, sorry, yeah.” I said

We all went to science, a sweet goodbye from school basically.

“Hey guys, who’s the new girl?” Asked Dustin

“What new girl?” Asked Mike, who was daydreaming, probably about El.

“That one, in the back.”

We all looked behind us, a new girl, red head, wearing jeans and a t-shirt.

She looked pretty good

“Lucas?” Asked Will

“Huh?”

I snapped out of it

“Class is starting.” He said, obviously trying to control his laughter.

The others failed to.

“Lucas got a girlfriend.” Said Mike, obviously loving getting revenge for the weeks that we’ve been teasing him about him and El.

I couldn’t focus on the class itself, which was weird, I usually never phased out. But I kept looking behind me.

“Lucas?”

“Wha- “

“Lucas, are you paying attention?” Asked Mr. Clarke

“Oh, yeah, sorry.”

He continued the lesson

The bell rang

“Lucas got a girlfriend, Lucas got a girlfriend.” Mike kept singing, obviously enjoying this

“Shut up.” I said, playfully

“Ooh, there she is, maybe I should invite her to the group.” Said Dustin

“What? No!”

“Too late.” Said Will, watching Dustin walking over to her.

They started walking back

“And this is Mike, Will, and Lucas. Guys, this is Max.” Said Dustin

“Hi.” She said shyly

“Hi.” I finally said

“What do you like doing?” Asked Will

“I skate.”

“Do you know how to play Dungeons and Dragons?” Asked Mike, with a smirk on his face

I could see where he was going with this.

“A little, my friend taught me how to play a little before I moved.”

“Well, I can’t say that we are experts. But I know that Lucas could teach you.” Said Mike, trying not to burst out laughing

“O-Ok.” She said, shyly, and a little suspiciously

“Great! Lucas, you give her the run down after school, the campaign

is at seven.” Said Mike, looking like he would throw up if he didn’t laugh soon

I glared at him, giving him a message.

“Screw you.”

“Well, bye Max and Lucas.” Said Will

“Bye.” She said, still wary

We left and headed towards the bike rack

I could barely breath I was laughing so much.

“Dude, That, Was, Hilarious.” Said Dustin in between the laughing fits

“Let’s hope she’s good.” Said Will

I still couldn’t talk I was laughing too hard

I finally stopped laughing

“Well, wait until you two get crushes. I might have to get revenge on you too.” I said, enjoying the wave of shock going over their faces

We headed over to my house and prepared for the campaign. They setup snacks, while I finished the ending, trying to remove as many plot holes as possible.

“Lucas is here.” Dustin said, snickering

“Hey guys!” Said Lucas, as he walked in, quite obviously trying to stay as nonchalant as possible

“How was your afternoon?” Will asked Max

“Good, it’s confusing, but I’ll get used to it.” Said Max

“Good, I just finished the end of the campaign so were good to go.” I

said

“Hey, Mike?” Asked El, coming from the stairs

“Yeah El?” I said

“Could, you come here?” She asked

“Um, yeah, sure.”

I heard snickering coming from the guys. I was the idiot of the minute again.

“Yeah El?” I said, once I got to her

“I, like you. A lot.”

Excuse me ? What?

“I, I do too? Why?” I said, after a moment

“I asked Nancy what I felt when I was around you, she said it was because I liked you a lot.”

Of course, it was Nancy.

“Well, do you want to come and watch us play? We made a new friend, she’ll play too.”

“New friend?”

“Oh, I’ll introduce you two.”

I walked her down the stairs

“El, Max, Max, El.”

“Hi.” Said Max

“Hi.” Said El quietly

“Well, ready to start now?” Asked Dustin

“Oh, yeah.” I said

El sat on the couch, and watched the game.

“You kill the Thessylhydra and you collect up all of its heads, and show them to Princes Dandelion and she gives all of you a kiss.” I said, looking at Lucas

He glared, an expected response

“And?” Asked Will

“That’s it.” I said

“No medal ceremony?” Asked Dustin

“Nope.”

“Disappointing.”

“Mike! Say goodbye to your friends! It’s past midnight!” Yelled my mom

“OK!”

“Bye guys.” I said

“Bye.”

They all left.

“El? Are you awake?” I asked

No answer

Not wanting to wake her up, I carried her, to my surprise I carried her all the way to her bed in my room without stumbling or dropping her.

I laid her down on the bed, and went to sleep.

4. Chapter 4

“Ok! You should be ready for your ‘date’.” Said Nancy
I looked in the mirror, it wasn’t like I was wearing anything unusual;
just a pink dress, but Nancy helped me put on some makeup.
“Pretty.” I said

“Mike’s probably done, so I think you can go show him.”
I walked out of her room and down the stairs

I was nervous, first date? I hated the thought of a date just three months ago, and now I’m going on one.

Suddenly, I was awestruck; She was walking down the stairs, wearing a pink dress. She was the most beautiful thing I’d seen in my life.

“Pretty?” She asked me

“Yeah, really pretty.” I said, blushing

“See you guys, get back before eight. And Mike?” Asked Nancy

“What?” I said, confused

“No funny business.”

“Keep talking and I might let it slip a certain Byers boy who slips through your window almost every other night.”

She looked shocked

“How?”

“Bye Nance.”

We left

We got to my choice of location, Benny’s.

Once we got off of the bike, El looked into the restaurant.

Her face turned to complete terror.

“El, what’s wrong?” I asked

“Nothing.”

“El, friends don’t lie.”

There was a moment of silence

“Benny.” She said quietly

“You knew him? Before he... committed suicide.”

“Yes, and no.”

“What do you mean.”

“I came here, first. They killed him.” She said, fighting back tears

“Oh. I’m sorry, we can go somewhere else.”

“No.” she said determinedly, giving me a small smile.

“Oh, ok.” I said, entangling my fingers into hers

We walked in

Benny’s friend ran the place now.

“Oh, hey guys!”

“Hey Earl.” I said

“Already know what you want?”

“I do, but I don’t think she does.”

“Then I’ll get you a menu.”

“Thank you.” El said

We sat down at a table next to the front window

“Here you go.” Said Earl, handing El a menu

She pointed at the normal burger, and a strawberry milkshake

“Ok little lady, and for you?” He said, gesturing towards me

“I’ll have what she has, but with a vanilla shake instead.”

“Alrighty then.” He said, taking El’s menu and going to the kitchen

“Thanks.” I said

The food and drinks only took around two minutes to get to our table, we were the only people there.

“There you go.” Said Earl, giving her milkshake to her.

“Thanks.” She replied

We ate, joking around, messing with each other. She got a little whipped cream on her nose, and I wiped it off with my thumb. God, I wanted to kiss her. I suddenly pulled my hand away and blushed, remembering that I didn’t know if she was telepathic. I guess she wasn’t, since she proceeded to dip her fries into her milkshake, her face unchanging. She looked so beautiful. This is how I wanted it to be, always.

Until she knocked her milkshake off of the table.

“Woah!” I said, but the shake was floating mid air

“Nice save.” I said

“Mike.” She said, looking at me

“What?”

“I’m not doing that.”

I felt a liquid coming out of my nose, and reaching my lips.

Blood

“Sir, he found out.” Said a voice through the speaker in my office

“Shit, move in dammit!” I said

“Yes doctor.”

Suddenly, there was a man in a suit walking into the diner
“Mike.” I whispered, noticing the man’s gun
“Run.” He whispered
So we did
“STOP!” yelled the man in the suit
There was another man waiting outside the door, with a syringe in hand.
“Mike!”
He grabbed me, and as I kicked and struggled and tried to focus my powers, everything went black.

Notes for the Chapter:

So... the angst train has arrived. A shorter chapter, but there's more to come.

PS: I made the dick move of uploading chapter 3 again as chapter 4. Thanks to Olsulor11 for pointing this out!!

5. Chapter 5

“Hey Nancy have you seen Mike and El?” Yelled my mom
“No!” I Yelled back

“Do you know where they went!?”

“No! Mike said he wanted it to be a surprise!”

Where was he? It was quite unusual for Mike to get home late. But it was his first date so I decided to cut him some slack.

“Well! Tell me when they get home! I’m going to bed!”

“Yes mom!”

They never got home that night, I had stayed up all night waiting for them, and they never showed up.

I walked downstairs to get some breakfast

“When did they get home last night?” Asked my mom from the kitchen

“They. They didn’t.”

“What do you mean they didn’t?”

“They never got home last night.”

“Well they have to be somewhere, have you tried the Byers’?”

“No, but I think everyone of his friends’ parents would call us.”

“Well, try them anyways.”

I could hear the door opening, it was a familiar noise, just confirming where I was. Only one pair of footsteps walking around the room. I was getting out of my haze.

“Eleven.”

It was papa

“I know it has been a... rough time between us. I’d like to change that.”

“How?” I said, cutting the air with the word.

“You can have your own room, and we wouldn’t put you in the ‘darkness’ anymore.”

The darkness, a room where I was locked in for days, maybe weeks. By myself, with barely any food or water.

“No.”

“Then I have no other choice.”

I could finally see, and I was adjusting to the light, when I saw a TV in front of me

“This, as you may know, is Michael Wheeler. Age twelve, height of

five feet two inches, still sleeps with a nightlight in his room. I will have to hurt him, if you don't comply."

It was Mike, sitting in a chair, in an empty white room.

"Mike..." I whispered, my voice barely audible.

I was getting out of my haze when I heard two pairs of footsteps coming through the door.

"Michael Wheeler, otherwise known as Mike." Said a woman's voice
"What do you want from me?" I asked, more of a rhetorical question
"We want you to comply, no issues, no trouble, no seeing Eleven ever again."

"Fuck you." I replied, a little shocked by my own language that came out of my mouth

"As you see there is a television screen in front of you." Said the woman

"Oh is there, well, wait until I can actually see and I might be able to tell what's on it." I said sarcastically

I opened my eyes to the room, there was a television screen with Eleven on it, sitting in a chair, in an empty white room.

"What the hell do you want from me!?" I yelled

"Comply. Or she gets hurt."

"You wouldn't. She's your precious science experiment. You don't even care about her, but you wouldn't hurt her. She'd kill you."

The woman gave me a sly smile. "You wanna bet?"

I knew they wouldn't. They needed her. They wouldn't hurt her... right? But what if... what if they did? No. I wouldn't let that happen.

"Yes." I said quickly, a sickening feeling in my stomach as the word came out of my mouth.

"Yes." I said. They wouldn't hurt Mike. They wouldn't. I wouldn't let them.

"Good, good. Take her to her room." Said Papa

"Take him to his room." Said the woman

"Mrs Byers?" Nancy's voice rattled through the telephone. The electrics were still a little patchy.

"Nancy? Is everything okay?"

"Yeah. I mean... did Mike and El sleep over last night?" Oh god. This felt like Deja vu. Except now, I was on the receiving end. And I knew to be worried. "...No. Nancy? I want you to ring the chief, okay?"

Don't panic. We'll figure this out, okay? We'll... we'll find them. Wherever they are."

Notes for the Chapter:

This chapter is abit on the shorter side, but we still hope you like it!

6. Chapter 6

The room was dark, they hadn't turned the light on yet.

"Get in." Said the guard

He shoved me in the room, and closed the door.

They turned on the light. Everything seemed pretty normal, there was even a mirror on one wall. Except for, some things in the mirror looked out of place, there was someone on the bed in the mirror.

"El!?" I cried

It wasn't a mirror, it was a window, a soundproof window it seemed, because she wasn't responding. I pounded on the window, it seemed to get her attention, because she looked over at me. Her face turned to a mixture of relief, and sheer horror. She seemed to be screaming my name.

"Is this your plan!? Put us right next to each other and see who cracks!?" I screamed

A scientist went into her room, and the mixture on her face turned into just one emotion: fear.

I started screaming again, ignoring the burning dryness in my throat. "Don't you dare! Don't you fucking dare! Leave her alone! Leave her alone! LEAVE HER ALONE!" Another scientist walked into the room, a fire burning in his eyes. Revenge. Suddenly, I see a memory. Not one of mine, but of El's.

"Take her to the darkness." Papa sighs, shaking his head in disappointment.

"No Papa. No! No!" Two men grab my arms and carry me down a corridor, keeping a firm grip on me despite my writhing. They throw me to the ground, and go to slam the door shut. But I'm too quick. They won't leave me here again. I quickly scramble to my feet, and one of the men is thrown against the wall, knocked unconscious. The other grabs for his gun, but I snap his neck. He's gone. Suddenly, overwhelming exhaustion comes over me and I collapse against the wall, as Papa cups my face with his hand. "Incredible."

Just as quickly as it came, the memory is gone. It felt so real. Then I realise: it's the man who got thrown against the wall. I try to push him away from El, but I can't seem to do anything with my powers in here. They carry her out of the room, and she's cries and screams, but

doesn't fight. She's afraid they'll harm her... or me. I don't know how, but her thoughts echo through my head. Don't hurt Mike. Don't hurt Mike. Without much hope, I try to push a thought to her. If they hurt you, I'll kill them.

"I need Hopper." I perk up as I hear my name from the front of the station, and at first I think it's Joyce. Oh Jesus, what now? We just got Will back... But then I realise the voice is too young, just as Nancy Wheeler bursts into my office, tears staining her cheeks and panic clearly written across her face.. "What in the name o-"

"It's Mike." She cuts in, her voice shaking slightly. "He and El. They didn't come home last night. No one knows where they are. What if-"
"Fuck." I sigh, putting my hands in my head. Even thinking about the Lab people finding Eleven is an unbearable thought. "If they took Mike too..." I begin, not quite believing that I was about to tell this to a 16-year-old who'd probably do something crazy and dangerous to try and get her brother back. But I do anyway. "Fuck. God knows what lengths they'd go to to get her to comply. Including threatening Mike. I know all to well that they'd carry their threats out. She would, too. Oh fuck."

"They- they- they'd hurt Mike? They'd hurt a kid?" She looks like she's about to have a panic attack, but at the same time there's hatred and vengeance in her eyes that scared me a little. "They hurt her. Since she was a baby. I've... I've seen the tapes. And, well, they aren't pretty."

"Wh- what did they do?" She asked, worriedly. I didn't want to tell her, I wanted to spare her the pain and the sadness that came on those tapes. "They..."

"No! No!" I cried, trying to wriggle free of the grip of my captors
"Mike!" I screamed "Help! Help me!"

"He cant hear you, he will have the same fate if you do not comply, Eleven" Said Papa, coming up to me "Take her to the room." He said coldly

"No!" I screamed

"Eleven! EL! Where are you taking her you bastards!?" I yelled "EL!"
They dragged her out of the room, she was screaming and crying.

"Help!" I heard her scream in my head "El? El, don't care about me, run, get out of here, just run." I yelled back "No, they'll hurt you."

She said worriedly “Don’t worry about me, just run.”

I don’t know what happened after that, but I thought she ran because she didn’t come back.

She didn’t come back. She was free.

“Hopper.” Nancy near-shouted, pain in her eyes. “What did they do?” “They forced her to comply with them. If she didn’t, Brenner would beat her. Or, they did until she turned about 11. It wasn’t affecting her. So they locked her in darkness. Alone. For days. That damn near broke her. And when they had Joyce and I... they didn’t give a fuck about rules anymore. They almost killed me. I mean, they wouldn’t kill Mike. They’re too smart for that. But they’d do pretty much anything else.”

Run. Run. I’ll be fine, just run. Mike’s words echo around my head as I limp through the woods, sticks and stones piercing my feet. I want to turn back. I need to save Mike. But his voice speaks to me through my head. No. Don’t stop. Just run. Please El. Run. So I keep running, until I see a fort. “Castle Byers. All friends welcome.” Too tired to go any further, I collapse into the blankets and immediately fall asleep in the cold.

“No. No no no no no. They can’t. They can’t, Hop. They can’t. He’s my baby brother. They can’t.” I stand up and place firm hands on her shoulders. “Hey. Hey! Listen to me. We’re gonna find them. I’ll call Joyce, and we’ll go looking, okay? We’ll all go looking. Go tell them boys... Henderson and Sinclair? Go get them. Bring them here. We’ll search the woods. And we’ll find them, okay?”

“Yes sir.” She replies quietly, before rushing out of the station. Fuck. I think. Too soon. This is all too soon.

7. Chapter 7

Notes for the Chapter:

Hmm... definitely only just uploaded this chapter just now. Certainly didn't upload and then delete what..?

Only a day late! Apologies for that (even though I really have no excuse since I've finished school).

“What’s wrong with you!? What is wrong with you!?” Mike shouted, sounding hurt. I didn’t want to hurt him, it just all happened so fast. Mike must’ve hated me, I ran, I didn’t want to see another person that I hurt. I ran into the woods, as far away from them as I could, I ran until I got tired. I found a lake, and all I saw in my reflection was a monster. I ran until I passed out. I ran.

Once everyone was together at the Station, Hop began dispersing weapons, giving the younger kids only bats and an axe, much to their dismay. “Okay. Henderson and Sinclair, you two search near the southern side of Mirkwood. Joyce and Will, you guys stay North. Nancy and I will check the East. Everyone stay on Channel 6. If anyone finds Mike or El... or anything else, radio in. Got that?”

“Yes sir.” The 3 boys replied simultaneously. Hopper looked over the group, and, with a nod, sent them off to search their separate parts of the woods. He then turned to the teenager next to him, a determined expression set over her face like stone. “Are you ready?” Nancy took the safety off her gun and placed it in her belt, turning to him. “I’m going to find El and my brother. And then I’m going to kill the bastards that took them.”

After about half an hour of searching, heavy pellets of rain began pouring down onto them, threatening to flood the woods. “Alright,” Hopper sighed into his radio “give it five more minutes. If the rain hadn’t stopped, we head in. Copy?” Reluctant “copy”s filled through, and he turned to Nancy. He went to say something, say anything, but she was running. “Nancy? Nancy! Where the hell are you going?” Hopper chased after her, and she stopped abruptly. Coming up beside her, he noticed what she’d seen; Castle Byers. “Do you think...” she began quietly, a little hope daring to fill her eyes. He pulled beside the cover, and she peered inside. She didn’t know whether to sigh in

relief or scream. El was there, alive. She'd obviously escaped the bad men. But she was dirty, her face bruised and scratched, probably developing hypothermia every second, the (albeit faint) rise and fall of her chest the only sign she was still alive. And she was alone. No Mike. Where the fuck was Mike? She began to panic, ready to scream, but suddenly El's chest stood still and she felt her own heart stop beating. They had to get her indoors now, otherwise when they eventually did get Mike, he'd feel as if his life wasn't worth living. He'd been enough of a mess when she was missing... if she was dead, he'd be jumping off the edge. "Come on." Nancy said firmly, stepping back to let Hopper gather the small, fragile girl in his arms and start rushing in the direction of Joyce's house. "Does everyone copy?" She spoke into the supercom, ignoring the tears burning behind her eyes. "It's El. We found El."

They drilled him for days. They shouted down his ear, spit covering his bruised, dirty face. When that didn't work, they resorted to torture. But Mike wouldn't cave in. He was left in so much pain day after day, but he couldn't keep himself from smiling. She had escaped. She was free.

"Come on kid, just tell us where Subject Eleven went. We don't want to keep hurting you." The man's words could have been taken as pleading, but his voice was steely and cold. Mike leant forward in his chair, and gave him a sly smile. The man groaned internally. Over the last few days, they had come to recognise the grin as an act of defiance. Whenever he wore it, he'd stay stubborn and firm. "First of all, her name isn't 'Subject Eleven. It's El. Not Eleven, El. She's a real person. She's more human than any of you. And secondly, why would I tell you?" Exasperated, the man swung for Mike's face, and he sat, accepting it. He was so used to the pain by now that he didn't feel it. He didn't feel anything. Just numb.

Mike. She haunted his dreams. Except she wasn't haunting them. He didn't know how, but he felt the realness of them. They were real. She was reaching out to him. Night soon became his favourite time, when he could see her face again. He couldn't live without seeing those gentle, yet guilt ridden eyes. Or that small, sweet smile that, even now, managed to make him not feel numb. It was the only thing that could. Those nights were the only thing keeping him together. She was the only thing keeping him strong. *Mike. I'll come back. I promise.* He only hoped that there'd be a person to come back to.

Notes for the Chapter:

Ahhhh!!! Poor Mike, I wonder whether they'll ever find him (or if, when they do, he'll be the same). Until next time (which, again, might be a little late since it's Crimbo week and whatnot)...

8. Chapter 8

Notes for the Chapter:

Yes, upload schedules exist. No, I am not sticking to one.

We found her, but where was he? El had been at the Byers' for two hours, but she hadn't been talking, every time someone would try and ask her a question, she would curl up into a ball on the couch. The trio was still out in the rain, nobody knew where they had gone. They hadn't been replying to the radio either.

Suddenly, the three barged into the house.

"Where were you!? We've been worrying about you three for the past two hours!" Yelled Joyce

"Sorry, the battery on Dustin's supercomm died, and we lost the connection to you guys because of the storm. We found Dustin but we got lost." Said Will guiltily

"Well, at least you guys are safe. They found El." Said Joyce

"They found El? What about Mike?" Asked Lucas

"We don't know. She won't talk." Said Joyce sadly

The truth was that the storm wasn't the thing that knocked out their connection, when Nancy found El she started blocking their supercomms, prolonging their arrival home, she knew it was a selfish thing to do, but she knew that she wouldn't be able to ignore them, but if she said what happened to Mike, it just made it real.

The three boys spotted El on the couch coved in a blanket and rushed over to her.

"Where is he?" Asked Dustin cautiously

"L-Lab." Said El, reverting to single words as a form of communication.

"Hawkins Lab?" Asked Hopper

El nodded, tears starting to come to her eyes.

"What happened? Why is he there?" Asked Lucas fretfully

"Bad men, took us." Said El

"How about I take you home." Offered Hopper, seeing that they weren't going to get anything else from her tonight

"No." Said El, not wanting to have to go back to her house, the place where the boy that's trapped in a lab lived, not wanting to have to

confront the mother of that boy.

“She’ll stay here for the night.” Said Joyce “Then she can go home in the morning.”

“Ok. Nancy, can you take these two to their homes?” Asked Hopper, motioning towards Lucas and Dustin

“Yeah, yeah sure.” Said Nancy, holding back tears, her brother was gone, lost to a lab, used as bait, she didn’t know what to do about it.

“What do you think happened?” Dustin asked Lucas

“I don’t know, but whatever it is, we’re going to get Mike back. Lucas said assuring himself, even though he had no clue on what they should do.

Dustin, Lucas, and Nancy left, leaving the five to figure out what to do.

“She’ll sleep in my room, I can just sleep in Jonathan’s room.” Said Will

“Ok, I’ll take the floor.” Said Jonathan

“I’ll sleep on the couch.” Said Hopper “To make sure you’re safe if they come after her.”

El cried herself to sleep that night, and every night for the next week. Every night getting the nightmare that they would kill him to get to her. She never got a good night’s sleep.

“Don’t worry, I get them too, you just have to bear through it.” Mike’s voice went through her head every night. He hoped it helped, he hoped she could live through her pain. Every night he had the feeling that she was going to be trapped and would be back in her room the next day, but every morning he woke up, and no one was in the room. It assured him, it assured him that he could live through the pain, that he could make it, because she went through this for twelve years, and she turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to him.

“Hello Eleven.” The sharp voice bounced around the blackness. Slowly, El turned to face it’s owner. “Papa.” She whispered, her words catching in her throats and coming out an unrecognisable whimper. “It’s okay Eleven.” He said, a cold smile plastering his face as he stepped forward. El scrambled back. “Don’t you want to come home? We miss you very much.” His body evaporated into thin air, and as she spun to the side, he was there again. Holding a gun to Mike’s head. “Come home, Eleven. We miss you so much. Come home. You’re sick, but Papa is going to make it better. Papa will make everything better.” Trembling from head to toe, she

shook her head, taking another lurching step backwards. "No." Tutting, he took the safety from the gun. The click seemed to echo through the whole space. "Come home Eleven. Come home. Papa will make you better."

"No!" She shouted, falling to her knees. "No! No! Stop!"

"I see. You aren't being very good, are you Eleven? I guess that means you need to be taught a lesson."

"Please, no..." she whispered, as the trigger was pulled and a loud bang shook the ground. Then they were gone. El pulled her knees to her chest as wracking sobs escaped her chest. "Eleven." The voice this time was different. Soft. Familiar. "Mike." The dark haired boy knelt down next to her and was immediately engulfed in a teary hug, at which he laughed. "Go home, Eleven." He whispered into her shoulder. She pulled away, confusion filling her face. "What?"

"Go home." Suddenly, his face began to change before her very eyes. The dark, wavy locks of hair upon his head tumbled down to the floor, leaving this Mike with a closely trimmed buzz cut. The right half of his face peeled away, exposing torn, bloody flesh. Maggots crawled around. This Mike's hands grew bony and wrinkled, shrivelled and black. "Go home."

El began to scream, scrambling away and towards Lucas and Dustin, who'd appeared behind her. They pushed her away, shouting in her face, spittle flying. "What is wrong with you?" These words seemed to echo round the space, coming from everywhere and nowhere all at once. "Mike is gone and it's because of you! You're the monster! Will disappeared and it was your fault! You opened the gate! You got him taken to the Upside Down!" Brenner was back now, and he'd brought others. Benny. Barb. All the dead men from the lab. Their voices were unbearably loud, and El shrunk to the ground, tears streaming down her cheeks, hands covering her ears and knees brought to her chest. "It's all your fault!"

El shot up in the bed screaming, unable to stop. Will, who may or may not have already been awake due to some certain slugs which he may or may not have been secretly throwing up since he'd returned, burst into the room and was by her side in a matter of seconds, shaking her shoulders and silently begging her to wake up from the glassy-eyed state she'd entered. As Joyce rushed to the door, he'd succeeded in stopping her screams, and El now resided to heart-wrenching, hiccupping sobs. Will pulled her into a tight hug, and in that moment, as she cried into his shoulder and he pushed away images of the Upside Down which tried to invade, a silent bond was forged between the two. A silent connection. A silent promise.

Somewhere, deep in a laboratory not so far away, a young boy can swear he hears her screaming. His sobs hiccup in synch with hers.

Notes for the Chapter:

So as you can see I kill/almost kill people regularly in my fics (see: CBFAG;WISIWFY)

9. Chapter 9

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey guys! IWriteWorksNotTragedies (Previously StrangerThingsMileven) here! Sorry we haven't posted too much lately, it's been a pretty hectic year and I've been lacking idea and time to write. I can't say anything for janeelevenives83, but i think this series should come back to being weekly/every other week.

Anyways, sorry this chapter is so short, we had started it in February and never got around to finishing it until recently. (What a pitiful return am i right??).

On with the show...

Hours passed. She couldn't take it anymore. It was too painful, the nightmares, that fact that it was her fault that he was in there, if she hadn't come with him that night. She decided that she was going to go save him by herself. She had to. No one else was going to get hurt because of her.

She crept out of her bed, tiptoeing, trying to stay silent. She'd done it so many times, that week in November. Nobody had known she was in the house. *Nobody would get hurt that way.* But there were spots in the Byers's floor that creaked loudly, one of which she stepped on as she neared the door. The sound sounded amplified in the otherwise silent house. There was no way that could've gone unnoticed...

So, she bolted out the front door, and began to run for the woods. Until a flashlight shone over her, and two large hands landed on her shoulders, flipping her around.

"Eleven?" Hopper bent down to her level, hands still on her shoulders. "Where are you going?" His voice was gruff, but his face was gentle and his eyes were flooded with concern. He cared.

“I-I can’t just leave him there, they’ll kill him.” She said fearfully. “It’s all my fault.” She was scared, scared of what they were going to do to him.

“Come on.” Hopper said reassuringly. “Let’s go inside and wait for everyone else to wake up and make a plan. We are going to get him out of there.” He didn’t know what on earth they could do, but he knew they at least had to try.

The two of them went back inside and sat on the couch, Hopper comforting El while trying to make a half-decent plan of getting Mike out of the lab. It was nearly five in the morning when he had a rough idea of what to do. He had broken in before, he could do it again, even if they had upped security, they can’t watch every angle, they just had to find the right spot to get in.

When it turned seven, Hopper decided to wake everyone in the house up.

“Will! Get Your friends over here as soon as possible!” Hopper yelled from the living room. “And Jonathan, get Nancy over here as well!”

Joyce walked out of her bedroom, looking confused, a little dazed, but most of all tired.

“Hop, what are you doing?” She asked groggily, starting to make coffee.

“I decided that we needed to make a plan, we need to get him out of that place before they kill him.” Said Hopper

“Nancy should be on her way!” Jonathan called from his room, getting dressed.

“So should the boys!” Called Will, trying to find his socks.

The morning went on, Joyce made breakfast and coffee, Nancy got there around seven-thirty, the boys got there at eight. They hatched a plan at the table, and finalized it.

“Nancy, you’re going to go for recon this afternoon, find a weak point in the fence, where there aren’t many cameras. Boys, you three are

going to make a distraction on the other side of the fence with some old fireworks I have in my trailer. Then El, Jonathan and I will go find Mike. Joyce, you'll be the getaway driver. Everyone got it?" Explained Hopper

"Got it." Everyone said in unison.

"Nancy, go figure out where the weak spot is, make sure you don't get spotted by the cameras. Boys, go get the fireworks from my trailer, they're under the stairs leading up to it. Jonathan, help Joyce and El get a prep kit ready for Mike, God knows what they did to him." Hopper said solemnly. "Come on everybody, move it!" He said loudly.

10. Break-in//Broken

That night, everyone broke in, Lucas' job was taking out lights with his slingshot, Will was to listen for Lucas' signal to tell Dustin to light firecrackers in attempts to attract the guards. Nancy was the lookout to watch over Hopper, Joyce, and Eleven, and make sure they didn't get caught on they're way inside.

Once it turned 10:30 PM the plan switched into gear.

“Southwest light down” Lucas reported into his radio, doing the same as he knocked out all the other lights.

Will gave Dustin the signal once Lucas gave the all clear and Dustin proceeded to light the string of fifty dollars' worth of firecrackers that Hopper had bought for the previous 4th of July. What sounded next was the best distraction they could've hoped for, over 500 little fireworks going off in under 10 seconds, made it sound close enough to gunfire that they could see the guards that were watching the back-door rush toward them.

“Dude, come on, we gotta go!” Will whisper-shouted at Dustin who was already starting to run back towards the chief's truck, Will following close behind.

Nancy was sitting up in a tree watching the whole thing unveil, waiting for the best time to give Hopper the all clear to get to the door. The guards were approaching the place were the firecrackers went off, *and 3, 2, 1, perfect.*

“Go now!” Nancy said into the radio, as she watched the three shadows approach the door, once they got to the door, they stopped behind a bush waiting for Nancy to give them the second all clear, which she did, and the three figures slipped inside.

They were officially past the easy part, now here comes the hard part: getting to the lowest levels of the lab without being detected, finding Mike, and getting out in one piece. It was a mission bordering impossibility, but they had to do it, because of who was trapped inside that lab, ***there was no leaving without Mike.*** They were all

used to bordering impossibility, but their odds got infinitely worse when they realized they needed someone's keycard to get into the even the first floor down. But even worse they needed someone's keycard that had enough clearance to get to the lowest floors in the whole place.

Luckily Hopper had taken a "tour" and knew where the security room was, where they might have some luck in finding a keycard with that kind of access. They took to the side hall, knowing they had little time before they got caught by a security camera, Hopper decided to take a detour to the room, the only problem was that there was a guard in front of the room. Luckily, they had prepared for at least one guard takedown, bringing one of hoppers favorite toys from the police chief toybox, tranquilizers. Taking down one is easy enough and wasn't much trouble. Using his keycard to get into the room was also helpful. They had made sure to come at a time where people wouldn't be in the security room, but you can never be too careful.

With a nametag labeled '*Branson, Martin: Head Scientist*' They had what they needed to get into the lower floors, the rest wasn't too hard, everyone knew their way around the lab roughly so getting to the elevator wasn't a struggle. El had been trying to locate Mike telepathically but the lab had grown wise and somehow suppressed her powers. They were at square one in terms of finding Mike in the labyrinth that was the lower floors of the lab. But they had to start somewhere, there were ten floors underneath the lab, puzzling enough the keycard they had swiped only had access to the upper nine, the bottom one was restricted, so they decided to start at floor 1, and make their way down.

Every floor further down, the more dilapidated the lab looked, once they got through floor eight with diminishing returns they were low on the hope that Mike was even in floor nine, that he was in floor ten, and that following a pattern, floor ten was barely habitable. Once they got to floor nine, they searched the place top to bottom, every nook and cranny, everything, and he still wasn't there. They got back on the elevator, and with no hope, looked at the elevator buttons frustrated. Eleven got an idea, what if, what if there is no tenth floor, what if he's deeper, she noticed some odd about the elevator buttons, there were ten numbers, but there was no ten, just a

zero that they assumed was a ten. She proceeded to press the following buttons. *0 1 1*. Suddenly the elevator started moving down, further, and further, because there was no floor ten, but there was a floor *eleven*, sadistic fucks.

Once they arrived at floor eleven, they stepped out into a hallway covered in moss and dirt, that had only one shabby door at the end of it. They ran to that door, once they opened it, they were greeted by an empty room. An empty room with just a metal bed frame with a mattress that had springs shooting through it, a metal bedside table, and a cork board with a drawing on it, a very specific drawing on it, that had a little girl named *eleven*, and an old man with the name *papa*.

“No!” Hopper Yelled furiously, “We made it all the way here, for nothing! He’s not even here!” He shouted while kicking the mattress.” El was distraught, she could’ve sworn that this was it, it had to be, he couldn’t be gone, he’s here somewhere, we just must find him. “Unless,” El said quietly, “This was my floor, floor 011, but what if, he’s deeper, *what if he’s floor 012*. They raced back to the elevator, hopper putting in the numbers *0 1 2*. The elevator started moving down again, it kept going for what seemed like forever, but finally, and abruptly, it stopped.

They stepped out into the hall, but in stark contrast of the last ten floors, this floor was spot-free, with bright white lights illuminating the hall, with one door, but this time, not at the end, it was on the right side, with seemingly a window next to it. El bolted, this had to be it, this was their last hope, the only chance that they would ever see Mike again. Once she got to the door, she tried to look through the window, but it was pitch black in the room. Hopper opened the door and turned on the lights, sure enough, there was a boy, sitting in the corner of the bare room, with his head down.

“M-Mike?” El asked, although barely a whisper, she had finally found him.

Something was wrong, something was terribly wrong, instead of the long hair that she loved, his head was shaved, his body, covered in cuts and bruises, he was wearing nothing but the pants he came in, but they were tattered and barely recognizable, *he was barely*

recognizable.

“M-Mike?” She said, holding back tears, tears of sadness, for what they had done to him while she was away, tears of anger for what they had done to him.

He didn’t even flinch, it’s as if he didn’t even recognize that some had walked in the room.

“Mike? Sweetie?” Joyce walked over, “Mike, it’s us, we’re here to take you home.” She said comfortingly

“Home,” He muttered quietly, and hoarsely, “home, home, home,” He kept muttering

“We have to get him out of here,” Hopper said, “He needs help, but we can’t do that here.”

“Mike? Mike, can you get up for me sweetie? We need to go.” Joyce said softly.

But he didn’t move, as if no one had spoken to him, he just stayed there. Hopper picked him up, but almost dropped him out of horror and shock when he turned him over. It was Mike, but his face was covered in blood, coming from his nose, his ears, and even his eyes. Whatever they did to him, Hopper was unsure if he knew how to undo.

The four ran back to the elevator, and headed back toward the top floor, the tricky part about getting out was that the guards had assuredly returned to their posts by then, it had been over an hour. They were lucky, came out right at a shift change, they escaped to the fence and into the shadows once again.

Once they got to the truck the kids were already in the back, Jonathan was in the driver’s seat and Nancy was in the back. Once they had all loaded up, they rushed home. The trip home was a silent one, except for the occasional mutterings coming from Mike, no one knew what to say, they were all shell-shocked.

When they got home, they took Mike inside the living room immediately and got the first aid kits that they had made the

morning prior, to patch him up. The whole entire time they helped him, he just sat there, staring off into the distance, not even responding to touch.

There was a 012 tattoo on his left forearm, a permanent mark that would remind him and everyone of what he had been through.

This wasn't Mike Wheeler, this was an empty shell that Mike Wheeler used to live in, who knows how far deep down in that empty shell the real Mike is.